

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1172

S E C R E T BEIRUT 6335

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDED MODE OF EVACUATION

1. WHILE I HAVE HAD SOME RESERVATIONS CONCERNING EVACUATING BY AIR BECAUSE OF THE EVER PRESENT POSSIBILITY OF ISOLATED FIRE BEING DIRECTED AT AIRCRAFT, I HAVE COME AROUND TO VIEW THAT RISK ON THIS SCORE IS MINIMAL. I AM INFLUENCED IN MY VIEW, FIRST, BY CONFIDENCE EXPRESSED BY PLO SECURITY REPRESENTATIVE WITH REGARD TO AN AIRPORT EVACUATION (BEIRUT 6312), AND, SECOND, BY CONVERSATION I JUST HAD WITH COL. HAMDAN, FORMER TOP OFFICIAL IN DEUXIEME BUREAU.

2. HAMDAN, WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR BUREAU'S RELATIONS WITH PALESTINIANS AND PARTICIPATED IN DISCUSSIONS IN CAIRO IN 1969 LEADING TO FAMOUS CAIRO ACCORD, EXPRESSED VIEW TO ME THAT USTLOTJ LOORT AT THIS TIME WOULD BE SAFE IF MARONITE ASSURANCES AGAINST SHELLING AND PLO SECURITY COVERAGE OBTAINED. HAMDAN SAID THAT PLO HAS CAPABILITY OF EFFECTIVELY SECURING AREA AGAINST INDISCRIMINATE FIRING, AND THAT HE WOULD HAVE NO HESITATION IN RECOMMENDING THIS MODE OF EVACUATION IF TWO CONDITIONS MET.

3. I REALIZE THAT SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM HAS DIFFERENT VIEW (DAMASCUS 4630), BUT SYRIANS NO DOUBT HAVE POLITICAL INTEREST IN AIRPORT NOT RPT NOT BEING USED. FURTHERMORE, REASSURED BY FACT THAT TWO MORE ICRC PLANES LANDED HERE YESTERDAY WITHOUT ANY PROBLEM. ALSO, IF WE OFFER A LAND CONVOY

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EVACUATION AS WELL AS AN AIR OPTION, LESS ATTENTION IS FOCUSED

ON AN AIRLIFT.

4. ACCORDINGLY, I RECOMMEND THAT WE OPT FOR TWO SIMULTANEOUS EVACUATIONS. THOSE WHO WOULD ONLY EVACUATE IF THEY CAN TAKE THEIR CARS WOULD HAVE THE POSSIBILITY OF DOING SO. THOSE WHO DO NOT WISH TO TAKE CARS AND ARE PREPARED TO LEAVE WITH ONLY TWO SUITCASES HAVE THE OPTION OF GOING BY AIR. SINCE WE WILL MAKE FINAL DECISION BY SUNDAY, JULY 18, WE WILL HAVE TWO MORE FULL DAYS IN WHICH TO ADVERTISE THAT THESE TWO OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE (ASSUMING WE SLIP DEPARTURE DATE UNTIL JULY 21) AND THUS HOPEFULLY WE WILL GET SOME INDICATIONS IN ADVANCE RE PREFERABLE MODES.
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